

EXPERIMENT STATION IN NORTH POLE SHADOW

Short-Summer Crops Necessary to
Develop Alaska Are
Tested.

IN YUKON-TANANA DISTRICT

Uncle Sam Has Been Able to Mature
in One Season More Than Fifty
Varieties of Grains—Millions of
Acres Available—Season Is Brief.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

RAMPART, ALASKA.—I want to show you how Uncle Sam is tilling the soil under the shadow of the north pole. The old patriarch has established an experiment farm here on the Yukon within less than a degree of the Arctic Circle, where he is testing the short-summer crops necessary to develop Alaska. He is raising barley, oats and winter rye, and is experimenting with wheat, hardy clover and even alfalfa. He has ransacked the frigid zone, and his agents are even now in Northern China, on the desert of Gobi and on the highlands of the Pamir, looking for seeds. He is getting samples of grains from Abyssinia and the Atlas Mountains in Africa, and has no end of plants now growing here that have come from Finland and Norway, as well as from the northernmost part of the United States and Canada. As it is, he has been able to mature in one season more than fifty varieties of different grains, and these include spring barleys and oats, spring rye and wheat, and also winter rye and winter wheat. He is raising potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables, and has begun to experiment with strawberries with such success that he has produced a handful this year.

But let me show you where Rampart is on the earth, and how its conditions compare with those of other cold farmlands of the globe. If you will take your map of Alaska, you will see that Rampart lies on the Yukon River. It is about one-third of the way south from the international boundary, about half way between Fairbanks and the Arctic Circle, and is in the heart of the Yukon-Tanana agricultural district, the lower part of which will be thrown open by Uncle Sam's new railroad, now building to Fairbanks. That part is in the lowlands of the Tanana Valley. This is in the rolling hills that border the Yukon.

The latitude of Rampart is just about 65 degrees north. If you should run your finger around the globe on that line it would pass through parts of Siberia, Russia, Finland and Scandinavia, cutting large regions which are producing quantities of rye, barley and oats, and exporting live stock and butter and cheese.

Take for instance, Finland, which is just about one-fourth the size of Alaska. According to the figures of our agricultural experts, it has 7,000,000 acres under cultivation, comprising 271,000 farms. Its annual crop amount in round numbers to something like 20,000,000 bushels of oats, 12,000,000 bushels of rye, 5,000,000 bushels of barley and 18,000,000 bushels of potatoes. It produces 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 bushels of turnips, and about 2,000,000 pounds of flax and hemp. That country has now more than 1,000,000 cows, and it ships 35,000,000 pounds of butter a year. It has more than 200,000 horses, 200,000 hogs and more than 200,000 sheep. Its population is more than 2,000,000, and of these 55 per cent live on the farm.

There are parts of Siberia that lie in the same latitudes as the valley of the Yukon. Among these is the cultivated valley of the Amur, that produces millions of bushels of oats, and has hundreds of thousands of horses, cattle and hogs. The mean summer temperature there is about 45 or 48 degrees Fahrenheit.

MILLIONS OF ACRES OF AVAILABLE FARMING LANDS

The agricultural experts from whose reports these figures are taken state that their lowest estimate of the available farming lands in the Yukon-Tanana region is 1,500,000 acres, and in this they do not include as much as 25 per cent of the uplands lying north of the Tanana River. They do not take into the vast area of the Yukon delta, where they say that farming is possible, and the land about 50 per cent of the 2,000 square miles of the lower Tanana bottoms.

At the stops on my way down the Yukon I have seen small patches of cultivated land. Every log cabin has its garden and nearly every mine has its patch of potatoes. Just outside Eagle I photographed a field of sixteen acres of oats which is now in head. It will be cut for oat hay and will have a feeding value of \$1.00 and upward per ton. The owner is John B. Powers, the deputy United States marshal. He has a farm near Eagle, where he has forty acres in oats, from which he will cut this year seventy-five tons of oat hay. Mr. Powers keeps fifteen head of horses, and he runs pack trains from Eagle into the mining districts that lie fifty or sixty miles back from Yukon. He tells me that good draught horses are worth \$1,000 a pair, and that pack mules bring \$500 each.

At Circle City, there is a Swede, Nels

Rasmussen, who keeps seven horses for draying and hiring. His charge for a saddle horse is \$7 per day. It would cost him \$120 a ton to bring in hay from outside, and he has a farm which produces all the feed he needs. I have already described agricultural conditions farther up the Yukon near Dawson. I am told that the same sort of farming goes on near the towns all the way to the mouth of the river.

The government experiment station is just across the river from Rampart. The farm lies on rolling grounds that slope gently up from the river, and the house of the farmer, Mr. G. W. Gasser, is a pretty one-story cottage with a glass porch at the front. Below the house is a sloping garden, and behind it and to the right and left are something like forty acres of experiment crops.

We landed on the bank of the Yukon and walked through the farm a distance of a quarter of a mile to the house. The land on the right of the road was intensively cultivated, while that on the left was as nature made it.



Specimen of Yellow Alfalfa Grown at Rampart.

It, though, covered with moss and mud. I doubt not the glacial ice exists within two feet of its surface. A little farther back were trees and bushes. On the right near the river we passed a field of barley, the grain of some parts of which was fully six feet in height. The stalks were still green, but they were well headed out. I stepped into the field with Mr. MacPherson, the secretary of the Alaska bureau at Seattle, and Mr. William H. Fairbanks, of the Northern Commercial Company, and had a photograph made to show you its height. I am about five feet eight inches tall; the barley reached to our shoulders.

Passing the barley, we came to a field of oats. This was mature, and Mr. Gasser told me that the ground had been cleared only last year and that crops do not do well until the second season. Beyond these fields we saw a man plowing. He sat on a sulky plow and two big draft horses dragged him along through the furrows.

FIELD OF POTATOES

COVERING FIVE ACRES

Our next sight was a field of potatoes covering five or six acres. They were in full bloom, the stems reaching to the height of my knees. Each row had a label marking its variety, and Mr. Gasser told me that new varieties are tried every year. The six best now known are Extra Early Burka, Blue Wonder, Early Triumph and Early Ohio, Gold Coin and Irish Colander.

The potatoes are often started in greenhouses or cold frames. About four weeks before planting they are put in trays, slightly covered with soil. Sprouts come out to the length of from a half inch to three inches. They are so set that the longest just reach the surface. If sprouted, the potatoes start with a rush, and they make more than double the growth and yield of potatoes planted in the ordinary way. An experiment was made with six tubers of each kind. The sprouted hills had a yield of 250 pounds, while the unsprouted ones produced only 100 pounds. Potatoes are also sprouted by being placed in the attic or in any warm room. I would suggest that any one who wishes to compare with his neighbors in raising early potatoes might try the same method.

The season is so short here that

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right up and make you feel fine and vigorous I want you to go back to the store and get your money. Dodson's Liver Tone is destroying the sale of calomel because it is real liver medicine; entirely vegetable, therefore it can not salivate or make you sick. I guarantee that one spoonful of Dodson's Liver Tone will put your sluggish liver to work and clean your bowels of that sour bile and constipated waste which is clogging your system and making you feel miserable. I guarantee that a bottle of Dodson's Liver Tone will keep your entire family feeling fine for months. Give it to your children. It is harmless; doesn't gripe and they like its pleasant taste.

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a question of raising enough seed to meet the demand. Alfalfa is not cultivated so far north as this anywhere else upon earth.

As we looked at the alfalfa, I asked Mr. Gasser whether the soil was deep enough for the crop. In the United States our alfalfa roots sometimes go down many feet. Here they would be stopped by the glacial ice-bed, which is less than a yard from the surface.

"They stop at the ice," was the reply. "And the ends of the roots freeze off. However, the roots spread out above this, and by cultivation, the ground thaws deeper and deeper."

I asked Mr. Gasser if he thought farming could be carried on successfully in Alaska. He replied:

"Yes, but at first the farming possibilities will be determined by the demands of the local market, and these are very limited. Later some things may be raised for export. Our potatoes are excellent and our vegetables more palatable than any grown in the States. The quick growth of the summer makes them sweeter and juicier. Our turnips surpass any grown further south, and we expect that some day all the turnip seed of the United States will be raised in Alaska. We can grow lettuce, beets, beans, peas and carrots, and I believe we shall be able to raise many kinds of berries. I have just gathered my first strawberry. The quick growth of the summer makes them sweeter and juicier. Our turnips surpass any grown further south, and we expect that some day all the turnip seed of the United States will be raised in Alaska. We can grow lettuce, beets, beans, peas and carrots, and I believe we shall be able to raise many kinds of berries. I have just gathered my first strawberry. 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